

California Performance Review

Written Testimony

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Preparation of the Workforce - General Observations

1. The findings and recommendations contained in the report relative to Career Technical Education and the recognition of the important role it can play in increasing student achievement are both right on target.
2. There is growing recognition among educators, parents, and business leaders that strong, vibrant Career Technical Education programs have “real world” value in preparing students for both higher education and workforce entry.
3. These recommendations are consistent with the Governor’s wishes to stimulate economic development in California by ensuring the availability of a well-trained workforce.
4. The current level of student “disappearance” from our high schools between grades 9 and 12 should serve as a clarion call for discussion and action by education, public policy, and business leaders throughout California. The very real economic and societal costs associated with this phenomenon are profound – and we need to openly acknowledge and address this critically important issue.
5. The implementation of these recommendations in a timely manner is as important and compelling as any issue facing education today. The continued loss of programs, facilities, and instructors in Career Technical Education throughout California poses a challenge that must be addressed quickly if we ever hope to achieve both the academic and workplace goals necessary for sustained economic vitality in California.

CPR Recommendations – ID Code ETV 25

ETV 25-A – High School Graduation Requirements

The adoption of high school graduation requirements that provide increased opportunities for students to choose alternative means for acquiring critically important knowledge and skills is entirely consistent with ongoing school reform efforts. The “choice” between academic and career technical courses to achieve academic goals is a false debate – both environments need to be nurtured and supported if California is serious about meeting the needs of all students within our public schools system. Associating “seat time” in a specified course with an expected outcome for academic growth is both nonsensical and futile, given the very real differences in student learning styles, interests, and motivation.

At the end of the day, what students know – and what they can do – should be the determining factor for recognizing high quality education. Curriculum that is rigorous, relevant, meaningful, and useful is not the domain of any one area in education, and it's time we recognize that high quality education can, should, and does currently exist in Career Technical Education programs – an untapped source of educational growth that has been ignored for far too long.

ETV 25-B – Strategic Plan for Academic/Career Technical Education

The process of developing a strategic plan offers a great opportunity to discuss and analyze, for the first time, how Career Technical Education can, and does, increase the academic performance of students while contributing to the economic vitality of California. To date, that discussion simply has not occurred within the arena of education policy debate. The growing realization that this ignored area of public education offers great potential for addressing ongoing educational issues is gratifying – and long overdue. Placement of this plan within the Master Plan for Education is both appropriate and necessary to ensure that any future policy discussions include Career Technical Education as a vital and integral component of education in California.

ETV 25-C – Standards and Frameworks

Career Technical Education strongly supports ongoing efforts to establish statewide standards and frameworks as well as strong accountability measures to ensure that all courses are rigorous, meaningful, relevant, and useful for students. Those same criteria should apply equally to all areas of study in our schools, regardless of the programmatic area that offers the coursework. Attainment of real world skills while acquiring academic knowledge should be recognized and nurtured within our schools, and given appropriate recognition for the value it brings to students' lives.

ETV 25-D – Academic Performance Index

The educational effectiveness of California's schools is currently based on student performance on a series of standardized tests. Although this information can be useful in school improvement efforts, accountability measures that include the degree to which students are successfully prepared for the workplace should also be developed and incorporated as part of our state's Academic Performance Index to recognize the important role that schools should play in that endeavor. If schools fail to recognize their obligation to meet the real world educational and career interests of all of their students, appropriate factors should reflect their performance level in that area.

Closing comments –

1. The need to move forward is real and immediate.
2. Of all the areas addressed by the California Performance Review report, this should be one of the least controversial.
3. This is doable.
4. This is important.
5. Let's get moving.